



CLIC PAPERS

THE ROLE OF RESERVE FORCES IN LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT

**Army - Air Force Center for Low Intensity Conflict
Langley Air Force Base, Virginia**

THE ROLE OF RESERVE FORCES

IN

LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT

by

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CLIC PAPERS

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PREFACE

This paper describes low intensity conflict and the potential impact on US national interests. The role of reserve forces is developed within the context of four categories: peacekeeping, combatting terrorism, insurgency/counterinsurgency, and peacetime contingency operations. Existing and potential contributions of reserve forces relative to these categories are described. One concern of the author is the proportion of reserve forces to total force in those noncombat functions primarily involved in counterinsurgency. He also cautions against overcommitment of reserve forces in such peacetime missions as drug interdiction when it impacts their capability to train and maintain their wartime readiness.

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Reserve forces have been involved in low intensity conflict (LIC) since before this Nation's founding. During the establishment of English colonies on mainland North America militia companies were organized for self defense. These companies were not "standing armies" but rather assemblages of able-bodied male citizens who received periodic training and maintained their own arms and equipment. Because of the hostility of the Indians, these militia organizations participated in recurring low intensity conflicts that amounted to anti-guerrilla warfare. Reacting to Indian attacks on outlying farms and villages, they rapidly mustered their forces to defend key settlements. Moreover, in retaliation for Indian attacks they often dispatched detachments for punitive actions against the Indian villages and crops. This pattern of militia suppression of Indian guerrilla warfare was visible as early as the 1600's in Virginia and Massachusetts. It remained a recurring feature of military activity along the frontier line for about the next 250 years as settlements were established across the continent. Although the role of the militia units diminished somewhat near the end of this period, it never entirely vanished and the militia, then known as reserves, still acted against Indian guerrilla fighters as they had in early colonial days.(1)

Reserve forces were not limited to defending against Indian depredations. Owing to their experience with the Indians, they were quite effective in taking the fight to the British in the Revolutionary War. Present in virtually every locality, the militia organizations, whether under arms or in reserve status, kept the Loyalists (the Tories) quiescent and cowed and rendered Great Britain's only potentially effective tactic, counterrevolution or counterinsurgency, useless.(2)

While the Revolutionary War involved such common tactics of insurgency and guerrilla warfare as sabotage, terrorism and hit-and-run raids, contemporaries saw the struggle in the former British colonies as a strategic war rather than a low intensity conflict. The survival of the newly-formed North American nation lay in the balance, and Great Britain risked losing (as she finally did) a substantial portion of her empire. Today, while the tools of conflict may differ from those of the 1770's, the people of nations facing insurgencies see threats to their strategic survival similar to those the Americans and British confronted over 200 years ago. Yet, because low intensity conflict occurs in foreign lands, is predominantly political, and

may involve lesser levels of violence, many today tend to consider it non-strategic, purely local, and relatively inconsequential.

Such a view is not only incorrect, but dangerous. It shows a need for understanding, part of which entails understanding the modern-day role of reserve forces in low intensity conflict. The first consideration is to discuss what low intensity conflict is from the US perspective and why it is important. A recent White House publication, "National Security Strategy of the United States," described low intensity conflict aptly:

Low intensity conflicts, which take place at levels below conventional war but above the routine, peaceful competition among states, can be particularly troublesome. They often involve a protracted struggle of competing principles and ideologies. Low intensity conflict may be waged by a combination of means, including the use of political, economic, informational, and military instruments. They are often localized, but can have significant regional and global security implications.(3)

This is but one of several descriptions which have arisen about the concept and cast a shadow of doubt about its real meaning. One thing, however, is certain. Among the friends and allies of the US, when the spectre of low intensity conflict appears, the mask on the face of war all too often shrouds the Marxist-Leninist ideology, interests, and objectives of the Soviet Union. Numerous documents outline in broad terms how US national objectives support and advance US national interests in the face of this threat.(4) Focusing on the security objectives under which reserve forces would respond, we see several which are relative to low intensity conflict:

- o To maintain the strength and vitality of US alliance relationships.
- o To deal effectively with threats to the security of the US and citizens short of armed conflict, including the threat of international terrorism.
- o To assure unimpeded access to the oceans and space.
- o To force the Soviet Union to bear the brunt of its domestic economic shortcomings in order to discourage excessive Soviet military expenditures and global adventurism.(5)

Just as there are varied views as to what constitutes low intensity conflict, so there are disagreements as to what causes it. Some believe that low intensity conflict is a natural outgrowth of decolonization, while others believe it to be the result of superpower confrontation. This view is held by World Priorities, an international organization, and is reflected in their publication, "World Military and Social Expenditures," which states:

The long arm of military power is very long indeed. As countries come within the orbit of the superpowers there is also a greater chance that they fall victims of the ideological conflict between these two great countries. Even the poorest nations of the Third World (e.g., El Salvador and Afghanistan) can become the battleground for the geopolitical struggle in which the superpowers are engaged. The use of proxies both as fighting forces and as channels for the arms flow to areas of conflict is the new chess game of the 1980's.(6)

Such a view places the entire matter of low intensity conflict within the context of superpower confrontation. What it fails to recognize is the impact of a series of reversals in this arena on US interests over time. Some senior decision-makers believe that cumulative reversals in these conflicts can gradually isolate the US, its allies, and major trading partners from the Third World and from each other. The outcome of such isolation could include:

- o Isolation of Western access to vital resources.
- o Gradual loss of US military basing and access rights.
- o Expanded threats to key sea lines of communication.
- o Gradual shifting of allies and trading partners away from the US into positions of accommodation with hostile interests.
- o Expanded opportunities for Soviet political and military gains.(7)

The conflicts which can cause this isolation can occur in many forms. While the concept is ancient, the definitions and doctrine continue to evolve. In fact, one military officer recently suggested in Military Review that low intensity conflict may be a doctrinal foster home for orphaned warfare concepts. Some of those concepts include counterinsurgency, antiterrorism, peacekeeping, contingency operations, rescue and foreign military assistance.(8)

The Army-Air Force Center for Low Intensity Conflict has prepared an operational consideration for low intensity conflict which categorizes the responses into four major areas. These categories are: Peacekeeping, Combatting Terrorism, Insurgency/Counterinsurgency and Peacetime Contingency Operations.(9) Use of these categories is an effective means to prevent miscommunication with respect to low intensity conflict. Miscommunication often occurs when individuals discuss the particular mission areas involved in low intensity conflict. The speaker may visualize counterinsurgency in El Salvador, while the listener sees such a peacetime contingency operation as Grenada. With this in mind, let us look at the role of reserve forces relative to each of these four categories.

Peacekeeping: Peacekeeping operations (PKO) are military operations conducted in support of diplomatic efforts to achieve, restore, or maintain peace in areas of potential or actual conflict.(10) Military forces may be involved in peacekeeping singularly or as part of a United Nations or other multi-national effort. To date, the use of reserve forces in a peacekeeping role has been minimal. Most peacekeeping activities do not involve a national emergency. The small numbers of units required, combined with the extended periods of deployment, have traditionally precluded extensive involvement of reserve forces. Those reserve forces which might be involved in the future would probably be such specialized units as Civil Affairs or Psychological Operations units with specific expertise or orientation to a particular area.

Combatting Terrorism: Combatting terrorism consists of those defensive (antiterrorism) and offensive (counterterrorism) measures to meet the evolving terrorism threat. Terrorism is the unlawful use or threatened use of force or violence against individuals or property for coercing or intimidating governments or societies, often for achieving political, religious, or ideological objectives.(11)

Antiterrorism measures are designed to thwart terrorist attacks through the protection of property and personnel. With respect to protection from terrorism, reserve forces face unique challenges. Often with such facilities as armories or bases located in populated areas, efforts to protect arms and ammunition from terrorist actions can be demanding. National Guard and Reserve units often do not enjoy the seclusion and security that military bases afford their active duty counterparts. Base requirements sometimes force them to have valuable assets located close to base perimeters or near to each other. Such was the case in 1982 when seven terrorists destroyed nine Puerto Rican Air National Guard aircraft in one attack. Recognizing this, the Air and Army National Guard pamphlet on antiterrorism stresses the need for increased awareness of terrorism and suggests such security efforts as: relocating aircraft and vehicles, increased area vigilance, and enhanced personal safety measures.(12)

The other element of Combatting Terrorism involves offensive measures. These are counterterrorism actions and include critical rescue/recovery missions and attacks against terrorists and their facilities. Forces involved in this task require unique capabilities. Preparation for such activities often requires periods of predeployment isolation and extensive rehearsal, time permitting. Therefore unit reserve force participation is usually limited. However, as more modern weapon systems are gained by reserve units it may result in their participation in the future. Another exception could pertain to instances in which surprise is critical and the potential for success rests on employment under the "ruse" of routine deployments or training.

Insurgency/Counterinsurgency: Insurgency is an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through use of subversion and armed conflict. Counterinsurgency is those military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat subversive insurgency.(13)

The most common category that arises immediately in a discussion of low intensity conflict is counterinsurgency. US efforts to assist friendly governments in combatting insurgency focus on alleviating the legitimate grievances of the population while building the security necessary to meet the insurgent threat. US support to these governments concentrates on getting at the root problems of insurgency, which primarily require political, social, and economic solutions. US military forces can and do provide assistance to the host government's security forces. This security umbrella allows the host government to initiate political, social and economic reforms critical to restoring and/or maintaining the host government's legitimacy. In the process of developing that security umbrella, opportunities for active and reserve forces to exercise and train with their counterparts in those countries often exist. This coalition training, when combined with appropriate US force functions, can enhance the security umbrella of friends and allies. General Paul F. Gorman, USA (Retired), in a statement before the Senate Armed Service Committee on 28 Jan 87 outlined those US force functions that a counterinsurgency would most likely require. They include such non-combatant areas as: security assistance, intelligence, communications, civic affairs/PSYOP, mobility, construction, and medicine.(14)

While coalition training can enhance the readiness of reserve force combat units, even greater benefits are obtainable from deploying non-combat forces. These include not only readiness enhancements of the reserve units themselves but changes in the environment where insurgencies spawn. Reviewing General Gorman's functions and correlating them to the reserve component force structure can provide valuable insights of their role in counterinsurgency. The US Army Reserve, "Posture Statement and

Budget Estimate for FY 1987," provides information concerning the US Army Reserve and National Guard as a part of the total force structure:(15)

<u>Force Function</u>	<u>% of Total Force</u>
SF Gps	44
Intelligence	
Div/CEWI Bn	33
SIB/ACR-MIC	71
CI Det	47
Communication	
Sig Bde	40
Corps Sig Bn	62
Sep Sig Co	56
Civil Affairs	97
PSYOP	89
Mobility	
Trk/Terminal HHD	71
Trk Co	66
Construction	
Combat Eng	64
Water Supply	64
Medicine	
Hospitals	77
Medical Units	64

Examples of how some of these forces contribute to the counterinsurgency task include civil affairs and psychological operations. Because counterinsurgency stresses winning the "hearts and minds" of the people, these are specifically the units required to help develop a healthy infrastructure and then assist in communicating those accomplishments to the indigenous population. Civil Affairs can play a significant role in mobilizing and motivating the populace to support the government. A primary means of achieving this objective is through civic action projects which address basic infrastructure needs of the nation and its people. The PSYOP forces, on the other hand, act as the driving factor in developing the strategy for counterinsurgency. Benefits derived by the reservist include the opportunity to operate in a realistic environment and help people with problems which might otherwise go unresolved. Other examples include civil engineering and medical services. Using reserve engineering units can provide opportunities to accomplish realistic training in austere environments while building needed projects. If some of these projects were constructed in the US for training purposes, the engineers might have to dismantle them once completed; in an overseas environment however, they could remain to provide permanent improvement. Additionally, in the US such projects could require extensive environmental and organized labor considerations.

Reserve force medical services units have provided, and are continuing to provide, assistance in "Nation Building" and "Rural Development." Using skills often derived from their civilian employment, they provide such services as basic veterinary medicine and health care. Medical personnel can assist in the development of a successful public health program designed to educate and train people in long term skills necessary to improve their quality of life. For example, programs for basic sanitation or efforts to protect the health of livestock are of lasting benefit. Quite often the status of livestock is a sign of the people's wealth within their community and is their major means of support.(16)

The use of reserve forces in these tasks through unified commands, where minimal levels of military forces are deployed to the Area of Operational Responsibility (AOR), is especially critical. Examples include the AOR of USCENTCOM and USLANTCOM where few US bases in the regions preclude routine localized humanitarian assistance. Reserve forces can be an excellent alternative.

The anomaly of the relationship between active and reserve forces in counterinsurgency was succinctly articulated during discussions last year at the Army-Air Force Center for Low Intensity Conflict. In the words of Doctor William Olson, Regional Security Affairs Specialist, Army War College, the armed forces are built "in reverse." He saw the active component structured for the least likely scenario, while the reserve component was comprised of forces for the most likely.(17) The idea that some forms of conflict would precipitate early participation by reserve forces is substantiated in the White House publication, "National Security Strategy."

Priority for manning, training, and equipment modernization is not based on their peacetime status as forces "in reserve," but on the basis of their direct integration into the nation's operational plans and missions. In many cases, the sequence of deployment in the event of conflict would place reserve component units side-by-side, and sometimes ahead of active duty forces.(18)

This movement toward a heavier reliance on reserve forces requires legislation to increase the reserve ceiling call-up available to the President from 50,000 to 100,000. Although related more to conventional than low intensity conflict, an analysis by JCS and subsequent legislation recently raised the ceiling to 200,000. Senior military decision makers point out that this increase is essential to meet the needs of the unified and specified commands and to prepare the CONUS mobilization base for further expansion.(19) While this is the prevailing view and the legislation increasing the ceiling reflects it, some argue that such actions would be deleterious to efforts to achieve the

essential grass-roots domestic support in time of conflict. While such issues are important in declared war, they are especially critical in conflicts short of declared war. The controversy surrounding National Guard training in foreign countries underscores this point.(20) Challenges by special interest groups and some state officials about where, in fact, these forces could participate in exercises and assist in nation building has become a vehicle for a debate on the administration's foreign policy. It is not coincidental that the emphasis of this debate has been on Central America, an area also acutely threatened by insurgency. Mr. James Webb, former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, expressed the administration's concern in a statement before the Subcommittee on Manpower and Personnel, Senate Armed Service Committee on 15 Jul 1986. In urging passage of the law that prevents governors from blocking foreign Guard assignments except when local emergencies intervene, Mr. Webb pointed out:

This is no longer a few isolated incidents To date the issue has been focused on Central America, which is precisely where some governors and the special interest groups want it to be focused. But the issue is not Central America. It is the equal readiness of National Guard units which will deploy more quickly than ever before in our history if we were to go to war, which are equipped with modern equipment against that possibility, and which must train on an equal level with their active counter-parts. Under present law, it is conceivable, and quite possible, that similar interference could take place in routine and uneventful National Guard training in Europe, Korea, the Mideast or any other geographic region, and even with specific operations such as the recent Air National Guard participation in refueling the aircraft that conducted the Libyan raid.(21)

Central to this complex issue is the often debated role of public opinion in foreign policy. The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations has conducted studies of this specific matter for several years. In their most recent publication, "American Public Opinion and US Foreign Policy 1987" they state:

Public opinion plays an important part in democratic theory. To be sure, theorists disagree about what the public's role ought to be, especially when it comes to foreign policy. Some advocate populist democracy, in which government policy responds directly to what a majority of citizens wants. Others argue that enlightened leadership ought to promote what it sees as the public interest, even if that means carrying out policies that are (at least in the short run) unpopular with the public. Still

others emphasize the importance of leaders educating and informing ordinary citizens so that public opinion rests upon a solid foundation and the preferences of leaders and citizens do not conflict.(22)

Thus the controversy surrounding the citizen soldier/airman/sailor highlights the fragmented perception and approach prevalent in meeting the challenges of low intensity conflict. This is especially critical in the arena in which reserve forces can provide the greatest contribution. These are the non-combatant areas where assistance can be provided to a nation to build an infrastructure and thereby reduce the potential for insurgency. The requirement for unity of effort in counterinsurgency is often identified as critical to repelling an insurgency successfully.(23) Accompanying this is the need for consistency by outside supporters. This is highlighted in the work of Dr. Max Manwaring at the Small Wars Operational Research Directorate of USSOUTHCOM. In studying 69 low intensity conflicts one of the most important factors was that support must be consistent to be effective and that the populace have to perceive the support to be consistent.(24) The most recent Report of the Secretary of Defense to Congress also stresses this point. In discussing combatting insurgencies the report declares, "This approach requires a long-term effort on our part. Insurgencies are typically protracted conflicts, and therefore our strategy must be designed for the long haul."(25)

Those adversaries interested in moving the US into an isolated global position look for seams in the national efforts to repel aggression. Such disputes as that concerning reserve forces training point up those political-military seams; they adversely impact the cohesive front critical to success in this arena.

An additional seam which adversaries attempt to cultivate for their own benefit is the distinction between war and peace. Although their ideology sees no distinction between war and peace in conflicts such as insurgency/counterinsurgency, they employ a wide range of informational techniques focused on the US, friends and allies to foster a perception of distinction. This is especially relevant to reserve forces as traditionally they are seen as a national capability only to be employed in time of war. One low intensity conflict area in which this distinction is more readily apparent is peacetime contingency operations.

Peacetime Contingency Operations: Peacetime contingency operations are those politically sensitive military operations characterized by the short-term, rapid projection or employment of forces in conditions short of conventional war. Distinguishing characteristics of peacetime contingency operations include orientation on a specific center of gravity

and the intention to deal with that center of gravity with a single stroke. These operations include:

- o crisis intelligence operations
- o humanitarian assistance
- o noncombatant evacuation
- o security assistance surges
- o shows of force and demonstrations
- o raids and attacks
- o rescue and recovery operations
- o support to US civil authorities (26)

Usually, tailored forces of highly specialized units are involved in these activities. Reserve force involvement usually takes the form of such specialized units as those that participated in the rescue and recovery of the students of Grenada in 1983 or the counterterrorist raid on Libya in 1986. In Grenada specialized aircraft of the Air National Guard assisted in communicating to the indigenous population the dangers involved and the actions to be taken for their personal safety, while reserve civil affairs units provided assistance to the government and people. Additionally, as previously noted by Mr. Webb, the Air National Guard assisted in refueling the aircraft that conducted the Libyan raid. Shows of force have involved reserve forces for several years. Examples include the rotational deployment of Air National Guard fighters to USSOUTHCOM to show US resolve for the protection of the Panama Canal and other vital interests in the region as well as the continuing participation of the National Guard and US Army Reserve in exercises in Honduras. Other examples include the deployment of tactical air surveillance radars to such places as Saudi Arabia and Honduras. Additionally, on numerous occasions Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard aircraft have provided mobility support for peacetime contingency operations.

One final area which has received substantial interest in recent times is Support to US Civil Authorities. While this could take many forms, the one most commonly discussed is drug interdiction. Several states, especially concerned with the drug threat, have suggested the expanded use of reserve forces in surveillance and tracking of suspected traffickers as well as transporting of law enforcement personnel. In fact, legislation in 1981 authorized an increased role by military forces in this area when Congress broadened the Posse Comitatus Act to include military participation in civil law/drug enforcement activities. (27) However, while illegal drug trafficking represents an obvious threat to our national well-being, the use of reserve forces to counter this threat must be considered or balanced against the requirement of the units to maintain their primary combat readiness.

Concern of using reserve forces in this area is exemplified in DOD Directive 5525.5, "DOD Cooperation with Civilian Law Enforcement Officials," which requires the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Reserve Affairs) to be notified of any request by a civilian law enforcement agency and to determine the impact on military preparedness.(28) Such actions are especially relevant and may be of increased concern when a unit's primary mission requires increased training time (a precious commodity) to maintain readiness.

CONCLUSION: In 1981, General David C. Jones introduced the "US Military Posture for FY 1982" by stating:

The crises and conflicts that have crowded the recent international landscape have underlined the increasing complexity and interdependence of our world. We live in an era in which a coup, a major strike, a terrorist attack or a remote war between contentious neighbors can, to an unprecedented degree, trigger worldwide consequences affecting national welfare and security and those of our allies. Consequently, these times require a comprehensive strategic vision that integrates regional issues within a larger global framework in order to manage change.(29)

These words are still true today. This strategic vision involves not only understanding how to use political, economic, psychological and military forces in both peace and war but also recognizing how to structure those military forces. Reserve forces have played, and are continuing to play, a critical role in that strategy. However it is important to remember their part-time nature as a military force. They can contribute not only through their readiness to execute as required, but also act as an important link to a consistent unity of effort. This link exists because members of the reserve forces are often both enlightened military professionals as well as concerned citizens of the local community. When employed properly they can support the Nation in meeting the low intensity challenges ahead.

FOOTNOTES

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